

Ozark

National Scenic Riverways



Monday, March 2, 2015

Riverways Reflections

As most of you know, Bill Black retired at the end of December as the Superintendent of Ozark National Scenic Riverways after a distinguished 40 year career with the National Park Service. He has now moved on to the next phase of enjoying his life and we wish him all the best. I am your Acting Superintendent for the next few months while the selection of the new Superintendent takes place.

Some of you may remember that I served at Ozark National Scenic Riverways as the Chief Ranger eleven years ago before I moved on with my National Park Service career. It is a privilege to be able to return on an interim basis, and I'm grateful to have the opportunity. Some of you have probably seen the news release announcing my arrival. I had to chuckle as I heard several comments about my photo. Evidently, more than a few people think I bear a resemblance to David Letterman! Well, I have been called worse, so I'm OK with this comparison.

Now that I've been back about a month, it has been interesting to see how the area has changed and grown, and how some things have stayed the same since I was last here eleven years ago. Perhaps the best thing I've seen so far is that the rivers look the same as I remember them from years ago.

The day after my arrival, I took a drive to the Big Spring area, just to look around. I drove to the boat launch that I used to use when I lived here and just stood there, soaking up the scenery. It was an overcast, chilly day, nobody else was around, and the beautiful crystal clear river flowed silently by just as it had before. I looked up in the trees and noticed three perched bald eagles. Let me tell you, this was a wonderful sight to see.

It's not the first time I've noticed this type of thing in a national park. I had occasion to visit Yellowstone National Park in 2012, after having last worked there 18 years earlier. The place looked exactly as I remembered it! These small moments serve to remind and reassure us of the timeless nature of our national parks. There is something very special about going back to a place that you left many years ago and finding it pretty much the same as you left it back then. It (almost) made me forget about how much water has run under my bridge over those many years.

These visits affirmed for me what the mission of the National Park Service is: to preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.

But the dedicated employees at Ozark National Scenic Riverways cannot do this without your help. Now that we have our long-term General Management Plan in place that provides the blueprint for moving forward into the future, we still have a ways to go. We look forward to engaging the public as we move to the next steps in the planning process. We will first turn our attention to development of a roads and trails management plan, which will evaluate access points and river crossings, including protection of the resources. It will also address the designation of 25-45 additional miles of horse trails within the park.

It is clear that Bill Black and the Superintendents who came before him left a legacy of steady progress since I was last here in 2004. My hope is to continue that progress while I am here on this interim basis, and I invite you to say hello and share your thoughts, ideas, and concerns with us as together we make Ozark National Scenic Riverways the best it can be.

Be safe and enjoy your Ozark National Scenic Riverways!



Acting Superintendent Larry Johnson

Ozark National Scenic Riverways preserves the free-flowing Current and Jacks Fork Rivers, the surrounding natural resources, and the unique cultural heritage of the Ozark people. For more information, visit www.nps.gov/ozar or Facebook.

Comments? Write to:

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